

## Advancing Sustainability Practices in the Printing Industry: An Imperative for the Future



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It's important to improve sustainability practices in the printing industry. The national and global communities are becoming increasingly aware of each industry's environmental impact, and the printing sector is no exception. The need for sustainability in the printing industry is not just a moral imperative, but also a business one. More suppliers, vendors, and customers are looking at your sustainability practices as they make their purchasing decisions.

Additionally, taking sustainability actions at your business can improve your financials while also mitigating the environmental footprint of your operations. Here are some steps you can take to achieve this.

### Developing a Sustainability Plan

Margins are tight and competition can be stiff; so, starting your sustainability outlook with the **three P's** can be a good approach. Starting on the financial front, the first P stands for **Profit** – the financial return an organization generates for shareholders. The second P embodies **People** – an organization's commitment to positively impacting society. And the third P represents **Planet** – an organization's effect on the environment.

In combining these three P's, a sustainable development path can be crafted for your organization. Often, this is in the form of a **Sustainability Plan**. This plan not only has the potential to streamline operations but also foster collaboration across different levels of your business, improving employee engagement and retention especially among younger workers.

This plan itself should outline the specific steps the company will take to reduce its environmental impact. It should include strategies for energy efficiency, waste diversion, fleet purchasing and management, and the possible incorporation of renewable energy.

The Sustainability Plan also should include benchmarks and timelines for achieving these goals. This will help companies track their progress and make adjustments as necessary. Additionally, it's crucial to communicate this plan to all employees and stakeholders to ensure everyone is on board with the sustainability initiatives.

*"While the journey to sustainability may seem daunting, it is a necessary and worthwhile pursuit."*

### Improving Energy Efficiency

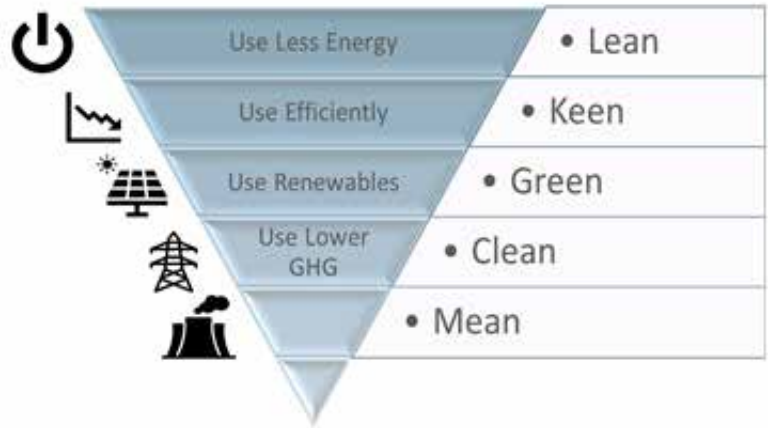
The printing industry is energy intensive, and improving energy efficiency is a critical aspect of sustainability. In fact, implementation of energy efficiency improvements is a recommended step to take before you consider adding renewables to a facility (see Figure 1).

Energy efficiency can be achieved through several means, such as upgrading to energy-efficient equipment and implementing energy-saving practices. For instance, companies can invest in modern printing machines that consume less power, use energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, encourage employees to turn off equipment when not in use, and/or have a third party energy expert conduct an energy audit at your facility.

### Adding Renewable Energy

After you have evaluated your energy efficiency measures, transitioning to renewable energy sources is another vital step. By harnessing power from the sun, wind, or other renewable sources, printing companies can significantly reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and decrease their carbon footprint. While the initial investment may be substantial, the long-term savings and environmental benefits make it a worthy endeavor. It is worthwhile to consider grants or available tax credits to ease the financial burden.

Figure 1: The Energy Hierarchy



### Circularity/Waste Diversion

Waste diversion is a two-fold process that involves minimizing waste production upstream and encouraging proper waste management downstream.

**Upstream**, companies can reduce waste by optimizing their printing processes. This could involve using software to maximize layout efficiency, thereby reducing paper waste. Additionally, companies can opt for sustainably sourced paper and environmentally friendly inks.

**Downstream**, companies should have a robust waste management system in place. This includes recycling or composting organic waste, properly disposing of hazardous waste, and finding ways to repurpose or recycle other waste materials.

Furthermore, companies can engage in a circular economy model, where waste is diverted by reusing and recycling materials as much as possible. For example, used printing plates can be recycled, and waste paper can be repurposed into new paper products.

By addressing both upstream and downstream waste, companies can achieve operational savings while simultaneously reducing their environmental impact.

Companies that prioritize sustainability can enhance their brand image, attract environmentally conscious customers, and potentially save on energy and waste management costs.

While the journey to sustainability may seem daunting, it is a necessary and worthwhile pursuit. By developing a Sustainability Plan, improving energy efficiency, adding renewable energy, and improving waste diversion and circularity, the printing industry can play a significant role in preserving our environment for future generations.

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